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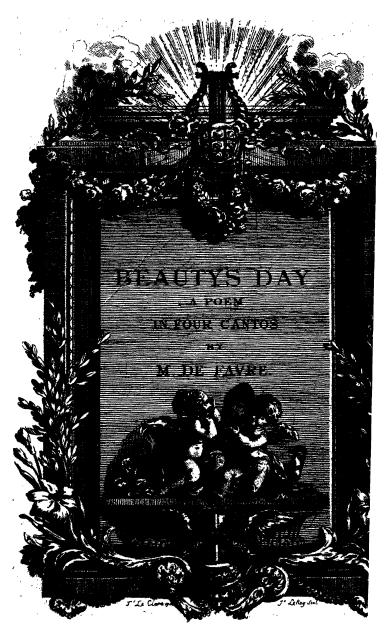
BEAUTY'S DAY

(LES QUATRE HEURES DE LA TOILETTE DES DAMES).

DE FAVRE.

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BEAUTY'S DAY

(LES QUATRE HEURES DE LA TOILETTE DES DAMES).

BY

THE ABBÉ DE FAVRE.

TRANSLATED BY H. G. KEENE, C.I.E., M.A. (OXON.),

AND

ILLUSTRATED WITH THE COPPERPLATE ENGRAVINGS, FROM DESIGNS BY LECLERC, CONTAINED IN THE ORIGINAL EDITION OF THE WORK.

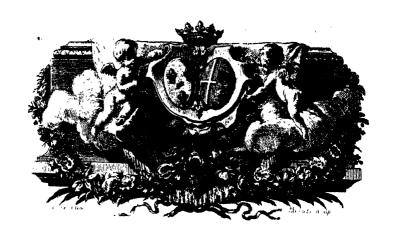


LONDON:

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ORIGINAL DEDICATION.

To Her Serene Highness THE PRINCESS DE LAMBALLE.

MADAM,

You are not ignorant of the fact that my first attempt as a poet was inscribed to the Duchess de Chartres.* Your Serene Highness is pleased to protect art, and grants me encouragement by allowing me to dedicate my second work to you. I venture to beg that your Serene Highness will accept the homage of my gratitude, and I subscribe myself, with the most profound respect,

Your Serene Highness's

Most humble and most obedient servant,

DE FAVRE.

^{*} Wife of Orleans Egalité, who was at that time Duke de Chartres.

THE ABBÉ DE FAVRE.

OF the Abbé de Favre, the author of Les Quatre Heures de la Toilette des Dames, there are but few facts on record. He was a member of the Academy of Metz, and his only other known work is Daphnis et Chloë, "an allegoric tale," which was published in 1777, and dedicated to the Duchess de Chartres. Of the Quatre Heures—inscribed to the beautiful, ill-starred Madame de Lamballe—there were two editions; one published by Nyon in 1779 in large 8vo, and the other published by Querard in 1783 in 12mo. Both of these editions are rare, a copy of the smaller and unillustrated volume having been sold some years ago by Grésy for 105 francs.

The poem is both careful and dainty; one of the artificial pastorals of the period; not so spirited as similar things by Dorat, but not without some thought for the sad condition of the real peasant. This interfusion of sentiment with what passed as classical elegance is a note of the whole group of writers immediately preceding the Revolution.

The idealised life of Arcadian and Sicilian shepherds seems out of place in our northern latitudes; but the spirit of the Renaissance adopted this as it did other forms of classical literature—though rather from the reflected representations of Virgil and Guarini than direct from the less artificial pictures of Theocritus. The first considerable attempt in this direction of English writers was the justly celebrated Faithful Shepherdess of Fletcher. In his prefatory address "To the Reader" we are made aware of a certain apologetic

tone. Fletcher was too sincere and genuine not to see that his poem made great demands upon the judgment. It was an error, he tells us, of those who went to see it on the stage to conclude that it was offered as "a play of hired country shepherds." We are bidden to understand that a pastoral is "a representation of shepherds and shepherdesses with their actions and passions which must be such as agree with their natures . . . but you are ever to remember shepherds to be such as the ancient poets and modern of understanding have received them; that is, the owners of flocks, not hirelings." The distinction may seem insufficient; yet it helps us to see how the pastoral of modern poetry arose. We must require all attempts in this kind to preserve the artificial character of their models: the ideal owners of flocks and fields in some climate of eternal summer, bearing stately old-world names, and in no respect resembling the Cuddys and Hobnelias of Gay's realistic attempts; or perhaps the characters may be of higher rank-gods and goddesses, princes, lords, and ladies. But, in any case, they will be shown leading an ideal life in an ideal world; and, by so doing, making the story partake of the poetic quality. Several pieces thus conceived have obtained a permanent regard from mankind: at one extreme we have the society-pastoral, of which the greatest instance is Pope's Rape of the Lock; at the other the visionary. vaporous idealism of Keats' Endymion.

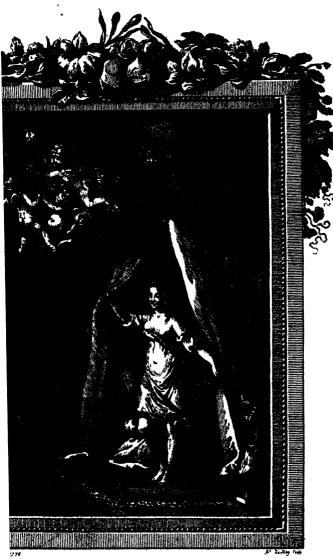
Les Quatre Heures de la Toilette des Dames presents illustrations of all these styles. In dealing with the subject of a lady in her dressing-room we find the author reminding us of Pope's work. He deals with Psyche and Diana in much the spirit of Keats—half poetry, half pseudo-classical fantasy. Here and there appear what may be taken as coincidences rather than echoes recalling Fletcher and the Italians. Accordingly, a varied style has been attempted in the following version, which will, it is hoped, be found a faithful attempt to preserve the mingled characteristics of an elegant trifle.

Very little is known of Pierre Thomas Leclerc, who designed the illustrations for the Abbé de Favre's poem. He habitually signed his works Leclerc Parisinus pictor historicus, but although he thus claimed to be an historical painter he would appear to have devoted himself mainly to portraiture and even less pretentious subjects. He is known to have frequently sent portraits to the exhibitions of the Académie de Saint Luc, and to have drawn a series of dramatic portraits which were afterwards engraved. He was, moreover, one of the leading fashion-plate designers of the period, and it is possible that there was some connection between this circumstance and the selection of Leclerc to illustrate the present work, à propos of La Tvilette des Dames. Leclerc also designed some plates for a poem called Jérémie by Desmarais, and a series of tailpieces, engraved by Fessard, for an edition of La Fontaine's Fables.

H. G. KEENE.

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BEAUTY'S DAY.

CANTO I.

PSYCHE.

I sing the morn, the hour at
For Man's defeat their fatal-arts prepare,
The shepherdess's homely charms efface,
And bid the goddess conquer in her place.
Love, light of life! thy favouring pencil lend
To deck the verses I to Celia send;
Paphos accepts the gifts of Celia's hand,
Her tribute is thy Mother's deodand.

By Comus led I enter the alcove

Where Art weds Nature in the cause of Love

Outside the day is gathering light and heat,

But wanished night I seem once more to meet

Brought back by Pleasure to this calm retre

Till, with a sigh, she leaves the charming spot; For Celia, waking, smiles and Night is not: Meanwhile the Hours about the dial play, And, slowly, open with a chiming lay One of their doors that gives to Love the day.

Now glance the needles, now the spindles turn, Now silk and gold in youthful fingers burn, Bright tissues, ribbons, flowers at her commands, Learn the soft industry of skilful hands; To Beauty's service every moment yields Toil in the town and labour in the fields, Sprinkles the bloom in Flora's bosom born, And finishes the task neglected by the morn; So blest is Beauty, every minister, While yet she slumbers, is at work for her; For her the artist blends his shining tints. The hind his coulter in the earth imprints. While his swinked fellow, following as he goes, The seed that is to feed her future sows. Thus, while your servants labour in the heat, Your curtained slumber wraps you, soft and sweet; Morpheus excludes the din and glare of day, While, deaf and blind, in down your limbs you lay; Thus, as you sleep, the world is racked with care
That Nature, when you waken should be fair;
While you, by day, no cares but dress invite,
Though secret flames torment you in the night.

So Psyche, in her sleeping, asked her heart, What, to her spring, such summer could impart? While from her couch, upon the fragrant sod The west wind bore her, bidden by a god, And wafted her to Cupid's blest abode.

Ah! gently deal with all those blushing charms, And veil her modesty from day's alarms; For Beauty withers at too bold a touch, And Love sees nothing when he sees too much: If, led by me, such secrets you surprise, Regard them, lovers! with respectful eyes.

Amid the dreams that round her swarming swing, See one caress her with extended wing;
And Psyche laughs—how lovely is her smile,
Not like an earthly beauty's glance of guile!—
And Cupid grows more amorous; for the band
Flutters around, and with a lavish hand

Adorns her in a thousand magic tints, And on his brain a happy vision prints.

Now, near the Palace, in the garden shade,
The sleeping beauty, by the wind conveyed,
Awakened, looks around in sudden fear,
And softly speaks—lovers discreet give ear—
"Where am I, Heaven? Of what device the sport?
What god is king of this enchanting court?
Is it in these sweet bowers, these rosy dells,
The unknown causer of my torment dwells?
What, second sigh? . . . Alas! I am alone,
'Twas but the echo of my own heart's moan!"

While thus she mourned she knew not Love was by Watching in ambush, with triumphant eye; And yet she felt that garden might contain The antidote to all her hidden pain:

Meanwhile those vain desires, that rising flame,
Those dreams and sighs from ignorance that came,
The conquering lord who made these passions glow
How beat his heart, their mighty power to know!
Then from his hiding-place he issueth,
Parting the leaves, yet hardly drawing breath,

With troubled soul draws near the lovely scene Where Psyche rested on a bank of green, Pierces her with a lightly-flying dart And makes a painless puncture in her heart; Then springs aside, a veil upon his face, Quenching his torch to darken more the place.

Ah! then what harmonies our lovers bless,
To steep their spirits in forgetfulness!
The echoes of a hundred neighbouring caves
Sent back to distant echoes airy waves;
Ye tuneful shepherds of the morning hills,
Cease for awhile your pipes and earthly trills,
Love deigns to soothe the startled beauty here,
Listen with her, to that soft voice give ear!

"O joy-giver! I am the lord of all,
I conquer Nature, and become your thrall,
For pleasing me receive the high reward
To share the abode, the godhead of thy lord;
My heart is thine, ah! say the like to me,
Be happy here, where all things worship thee,
Give laws as I do, take my lamp whose light
Will guide thy footsteps in the darkest night:

But use it not my features to surprise,

For he who loves thee must not meet thine eyes;

Thou drivest me hence by seeking to explore,

And shouldst thou see me I should please no more."

Scarce mistress of herself to make reply
Tormented Psyche answered with a sigh;—
"Sought of my soul!—if thou indeed be he—
How canst thou lay such grievous charge on me?
A black and brooding sorrow, day by day,
Has mined my powers and made my charms decay,
By sense of dismal destiny possessed
I long to weep, and weep upon thy breast;
O! calm my grief, banish this weary night
And give the world's high sovran to my sight;
A heart like mine, if bid to fear, revolts
Against the gods and all their thunderbolts;
Nor can Olympus' ire avail to break
The bonds that lovers in their madness make."

"Fair Psyche!" murmured Cupid, "be content,
Were you to see me you might chance repent;
You might be led to think me fickle, base,
If shown the expression of my changeful face:

Sometimes, as soft as any turtle-dove,
My features and my looks are full of love;
Anon, in frowns my countenance I dress
Jealous, and cruel from mere tenderness;
Shamed, I confess, a temper mad and vile
Replaces all the sweetness of my smile:
Ah! leave me, in the mystery I seek,
To please you, and to hear your pleasure speak;
For its own sake alone my passion lives,
And owns no joys but what concealment gives.
Seek not to mar thy power with scruples nice,
But let my love and my behest suffice;
Avoid excess; what profit could it bring
Like passion such as I am offering?
What boots or face or form, if I am your true king?"

"No, no," cried Psyche, "wert thou foul to see,
Thy voice, thy wit, thy love have conquered me;
Thou hast but fanned the flame enkindled here;
What more than mortal music greets my ear.
Thy pleading tones entrance me with their charms,
Benumb my sense, and steal away my arms.
Ah, be persuaded! harm will hold aloof,
You say you love me; let me see the proof."

But, far from yielding to these words of praise To increase his pleasure, Cupid still delays, A well-timed check will make a nymph reveal The softness that her fears would still conceal.

"Ah cruel!" wept she, "would you have me be Consumed by suffering's extremity? Take all I have; but show yourself to me." Then the lorn maid puts forth her longing arms, The boon refused her gaining double charms; The transport she bestows, yet dreads to share, Unbinds the clusters of her flowing hair, Her red lips part in passion's ecstasy, And liquid crystal trembles in her eye, All hid from sight, discovered by her sigh. "O love!" she cried, "my being's end and aim! Yield to my longing, show thy state and name." So speaking, with one hand she fondled Love, And, with the other, waved the lamp above: It flared; and, overcome with sudden bliss, "'Tis Love himself," she cried, "how beautiful he is!"

Love spread his fans, and on the Hours' swift car Leaving the pleasant garden fled afar; While Psyche—too enamoured to forget—
Sought him the wide world over—seeks him yet—
Pursues her vanished dream by night and day,
And drives dull Morpheus and his spells away.

Care of the god, whose brightest look you wear,
Psyche! new dreams still make your beauty fair;
Come forth! no borrowed spendour mars your youth,
Look in your mirror, you may trust its truth.

Such is the morning's fresh and plain toilette, Mere Nature, little changed by Art as yet; When Beauty from an amorous dream awakes, Her cheeks retain the bloom that vision makes, And, in the languor of her eye, remains

The tender falsehood with its pleasing pains;—Yet not for long; her native modesty,

Lively yet pure, her thick hair flowing free

Her ample and abundant veil shall be;

For Nature's grace is Beauty's brightest gem,

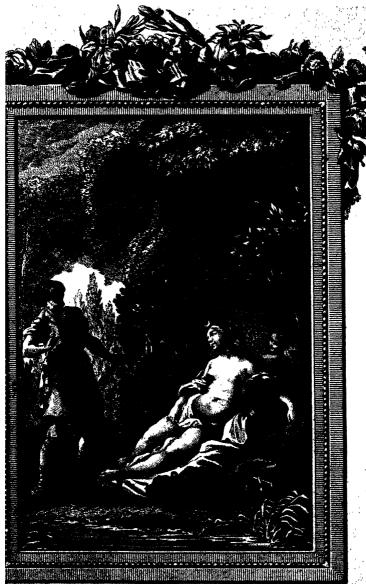
And Pleasure's roses make her anadem.

Homage to her whose exploits I relate

To make more fair the charms I celebrate!

And, when Jove grants her immortality, Celia, on earth, her substitute will be.





CANTO II.

DIANA AND SCAMANDER.

I HAVE told the guise of Beauty's waking hour,
The natural charm with which she leaves her bower;
Following the hours beyond the noonday path,
Now be it mine to trace her to the bath.

Phoebus, rekindling his exhausted rays,
Pours forth a scarcely-tolerable blaze;
But soon his fiery horses turn their heads
To where the West a milder radiance spreads,
Soon will the panting earth its rest attain,
And cooler skies bid Nature breathe again.

When noon is passed the town begins to stir,
And Beauty's servants work again for her—
For now the time is come for new designs,
Ribbons and flowers, and lace's chequering lines—

Safe from the elements these may weave and sew,
Yet rural toil has joys they never know;
After hard vigils Pan, with merry pipe,
Revives the shepherdess to tread the fern,
While tempted by the grasses, growing ripe,
Her unwatched flocks to many a meadow turn:
There, by the margin of a running brook,
Behold the fair-haired maiden careless laid,
Quenching her thirst, in that sequestered nook,
With village-milk, brought to the elm-tree's shade:
While Bacchus, seated on a neighbouring hill,
Sings, and the vine-dresser sings with him still.

The woodland goddess, girt with echoing sounds,
Brings, trooping from the chase, her breathless hounds,
And, as she nears Scamander's grassy banks,
I hear the river-god proclaim his thanks:—
"Is this Diana, bringing back to me
The privilege for which so long I grieve?
Ah, gods of every region! let there be
High songs of praise for such solemnity,
And earth and heaven behold the honours I receive!"

Now, let the quiver-wearing train

Assemble round her on the lawns, And Satyrs, Sylvans, Nymphs, and Fauns In throngs attend their sovereign: The pleasure-loving Naiads all Invite you to their festival, And each head has its proper coronal: Scamander, rising from his reeds, Awaits, anticipates Diana's needs. To-morrow, the severe Diana means To let herself by passion's voice be won; Blushing with shame, in violated scenes. To-morrow she will wed Endymion. Passive, to-day, and with a dreamy eye, The once ferocious huntress slowly sinks Into the grasp of this divinity Who waits her, at the touch of whom she shrinks: As a young Naiad, curious yet afraid, Beholds a Satyr leering through the shade, Even so Diana, in her new-wrought mood, Would fly the god who holds her by the hand, Just wets a foot, and wishes—if she could— To take her bath, yet not to leave the land. She feels the water's warmth, she sees the stir Disturb the placid mirror of the wave,

And break upon the dark mouth of the cave;

And then her bashful nymphs abandon her,

But all the jolly Tritons flocking round

Receive her in a storm of bliss,

For every one of them has found

A chance to steal a hasty kiss,

As if upon a rose they had lit

At once to pluck and water it;

As if the laughing stream had borne away

Flowers from the breasts of water-nymphs at play.

"Fear not, chaste goddess, to invade my leisure,"
Scamander says, "my dripping swarm
Must their due rites perform,
Preparing thee for pleasure,
Thy chastity they do not seek to storm.
Ah! never blush, nor measure
The unknown longings that have brought thee hither;
Clasp to thee close the amorous chain,
And let thy laurels wither;
Nor from the myrtle-buds thy hand refrain,
Nor think that it is freedom to abstain;
Thou wert far more a slave to bear the blame
Of nourishing a secret flame

Than when—upon the lonely mountain lawn— Thou wouldst prevent the dawn.

Night, for thee only indiscreet,

Blind to thy care has told the gods

How often thou hast quitted their abodes

Seeking a fate more sweet,

And here, on earth, a less august retreat.

Aye! when, before the break of day,

Thou wouldst await beneath the boughs

A hart that in the bracken lay,

We knew what shepherd-boy had passed that way Breathing audacious vows;

We knew the nymph that once you spurned— Calisto—had returned.

And all her mystery, and yours we learned.

Leave, then, your maiden cruelty,

The general weakness deign to share, Since Love has made you fair to see,

Be Love by you made fair!"

Confused, Diana finds her secret known,

Regrets the time in Cupid's absence flown,

And asks, while hot tears in the river pour:—

"Where shall I seek for peace, god of the Trojan shore?

Or is it by your aid that Destiny
Shall smile upon the bond that waits for me?"

Poor goddess! when her traitor-tongue had named That bond, her alabaster bosom flamed: Then Nature dewed the world with bounteous cup And Zephyr held her flying tresses up. Which Pleasure's hand imbued in fragrance keen And which the fingers of the Graces curled— The Graces who attend her in the world When free from waiting on the Paphian queen-Thus, as she leaned her languid form on them, And Joys and Laughter kissed her vesture's hem. One seemed to be in Cyprus, where hot darts Are aimed unceasing by the Lord of Hearts. The water-gods that swim or float In many a pearl-encrusted boat, And watch the motion of the billows. Surround her limbs with cool, translucent pillows. Or show a beauty that the skilful eye Surprises; and then scans it curiously, While, through the wet and all-embracing light That hides Diana from Apollo's sight, They satisfy their vision with her charms,

And gloat upon her modesty's alarms:
The muffled shell is blown, to celebrate
The coming day of joy and festal state,
While echo, on the distant air rebounding,
Marries the sound with ready answer sounding,
And while Narcissus, moved in spirit, wakes
To the soft harmonies the lone nymph makes.

Such is the scene the woodland goddess sees, Dear to the sex that Hymen's flatteries please; Wherever Beauty condescends to shine The happy deities will make a shrine. This is the time when Peristera learns To spread her well-matched hues on beds of ferns, To whose green carpet, spread along the borders Of the calm river, babes that bear the orders Of beauties and philosophers and kings-The fluttering Pleasures—on their frolic wings Out of the bosom of the water bore The charming Queen, and laid her on the shore. Behold thy mistress, O Endymion! In these cool bowers awaiting thee—alone: Why wert thou not already here Before she could appear?

Myrtle and orange-blossom, lilac, rose, Each, with its grateful shade, on her bestows Its element of aromatic balm. Where rest her limbs in soft voluptuous calm. See, how the stainless pencil of the wave To Nature's bloom a fresh enamel gave Adding the loveliness of rounded lines To each white curve! In every feature shines The fascination of a languid mood Wrought by the lulled pulsation of the blood, While, underneath the smooth of ivory-sheen, The azure network of soft veins is seen: Lips glow, and eyes present the heavenly bow, Aurora risen, or Thetis sinking low: And the cool bath that brought the pleasant hint Of amorous dreaming in its heightened tint, Softens her soul and shows her hidden pain.

"Ah, happy shepherd! Ah, my Carian swain!
Say, wilt thou make me languish till to-morrow?"
Thus, with a tender tone, half-hushed by sorrow,
The longing goddess makes her moan,
A moan whose cause art thou, Endymion!
I hear the sad lament, by Zephyr brought;

"'Tis thus," she says, to him that hears her not,

"'Tis thus thy faithless heart

In Hymen's precinct can escape his lure;
When for my favour thou wert pressing

How often has thy glozing tongue

The flattered praises of my coyness sung!

Then with what ceaseless art

Thou wouldst abide and make a meeting sure
Where pleasure sought the wave's caressing,
And where it shunned the wounding day,
Nor from those haunts were ever far away!
But now, to full assurance grown

Of my thralled passion's meekness,

Because thou knowest that victory is thine own,

Thou mockest at my weakness?"

[Nay, goddess! He is tender still and true; Love makes you wait, once made to wait by you.]

A flitting bird, the west wind's lightest breath,
Startles a heart where longing languisheth:
And so the goddess, with strained eye-ball, sees
A shrub that shakes among the neighbouring trees:
"'Tis he . . . ah, no!"

How heavy is her care,

Ye gods! and separation hard to bear!

Why art thou lingering thus and hesitating,

Shepherd! thou shouldst be winged when she is waiting,

And her sighs call thee: ah, 'tis often seen,

A maiden fickle when her lover's keen;

But far more sad, believe me, is the case

When, as if compensating that disgrace,

Cupid prepares a beauty, fair and fain,

In favour of a dilatory swain.

At last, facesounding, from the bank there float
A lamb's soft bleating and a faint pipe's note,
And, as the sweet sounds to the thicket came,
They served to turn away the bitter flame:
"Return, return, I pardon all," she cried,
"My angry mood is pacified,
Receive the crown I for thy brow have tied."

And these reproaches sting him like a goad;
Ah, Nymphs! be wise. Avoid the eager boy,
And seek from fancy what you lose in joy;
Endymion shall be blest a hundred-fold,
The true and tender swain, who can behold

His lady leave Scamander's arms, to bless His own embrace in self-forgetfulness.





CANTO III.

EUROPA AND JUNO.

In singing of the fresh vitality

Which love thoughts and the river's pleasant use

Combined to spread upon the natural hues

Of soft and bashful modesty,

And give to Beauty its entrancing splendou

I left the six a thicket laid

Yielding to joy a soft surrender

Beneath the branches liberal shade.

But note I hang my pipes on high,

Safe hidden in the electron gloom,

And from the bosom of the waters fly

To the gry glitter of the decaying room.

For now, in self, the sun appears.

To leave his arch in full default,

As, sinking to the earth he nears

The base of that celestial vault;
His flames, once wearifully bright,
Are fading, momently, in space,
Near his appointed resting-place,
To soothe our eyes with milder light;
And, stealing into you recess
For Cupid's worship curtained fair,
He sheds a tempered twilight there
That suits the bower where ladies dress.

In that voluptuous-shimmering shrine,
Where Nature blooms in Art's embrace,
Glimmers a consecrated shrine;
And there, enthroned in wedded grace,
The happy powers their spells combine.
Beholding all the great design
Of such a blended wealth of arms,
In the clear mirror where his features lurk,
Love smiles upon his handiwork,
And Pleasure adds her charms.
And there meet Laughter, Song, and Joy
To flutter ceaselessly around,
And there the lovely Cyprian boy
For mortal breasts his dart has ground,
Utters mild laws with silent grace,

And—to prevail in Fate's despite— Fills full the cruel arrow-case He means to empty ere the night: The frolic swarm in airy bands, From the high canopy swooping down, Hold o'er the Graces' heads a crown Prepared by their attentive hands. A garland which autumnal brown Will never wither where it stands: And there a treacherous nymph has brought, To heighten mortal hues, a pot Of that divine medicament That Juno's bright complexion lent, And careless if she move the Queen to wrath, Rashly determines to present A human rival in seduction's path.

For fair Europa's benefit

She dared to perpetrate the fraud

Which wins from Cupid pardon; he'll applaud

If only that himself had prompted it:

But, though with eagerness she pine

To use the drug divine,

Yet reason keeps her hesitating still,

And all the danger shows:

She fears to brave that high imperious will;
Offended jealousy, she knows,
Can mark a rival down and drink its fill.

"Ah," cried Europa, "what a bloom is here,
How well it suits my own!
The nymph will surely keep her theft unknown;
And then the theft of stingy persons' gear
Create temptations that extinguish fear!"

So saying, Europa to her task has flown;
Removed her kerchief, given to the eye
Her maiden bosom's budding blooms;
Ye gods! how fair; but instantly
An ampler veil the place assumes:
Transparent folds of filmy lawn
Upon her shoulders lie displayed,
The filmy lawn that Art has made
For Wit's conclusions to be drawn.
The chestnut meshes of her hair
Float free from every formal band;
Agläe lifts the mass with care
And holds it up on loving hand;
While her two sisters, prompt but dumb—
Each knowing well her duty—stand

Attending, till their turn shall come

To show the triumph of their art;

For feeble efforts should we see:

And poor would natural beauties be,

Unless the Graces bore their part.

Whether she sought her son—like mortal mother— Or whether only envious—like another— Venus appears in this retreat, Showing herself without disguise: Europa finds new triumphs yet, And Cupid with feigned doubt the goddess eyes: As active as the windy west Four nymphs, whose forms are half-undressed, Prepare the needful ministries: A thousand joys, with wings at rest, Await the signal to arise; And here, from Epidaurus, hies God Æsculapius, making sure That he can please as well as cure, Should fit occasion rise: And Health, the child of youth and sport, Mingles her hues to heighten ours, While Comus, in a crown of flowers, Is master of the court.

"What work is here?" the god of Love Exclaims, beholding all the coil, "Fairest Europa! All below, above, Bids you to spare such idle toil. When lavish Nature, fond and free, Her fascination round you flings. Luxurious artifice must surely be An insult to the gifts she brings: When from the living Flora's breast Young pleasures and enchanting wiles Shake showers of flowers with sunny smiles That she for you in bloom has dressed; When on your tresses floating fair My hand has scattered roses' wealth. And tufts of blossoms which by stealth These children gathered for your hair; You should assume a rural dress. A ribboned cap, a white corset, With garlands for your full toilette, A crook, a bag for bread and cress; And make yourself a simple shepherdess. Then, in a limpid pool of yonder brook, Regard your image, and be not afraid; For you must needs acknowledge, as you look, Nature alone should be your tiring-maid."

Europa's modesty, alarmed and dazed,
A compromising blush has raised
And waved a scarlet flag on high;
And, when she heard her beauty praised,
She murmured, with a laughing eye,
The wise and delicate reply
That sudden shock was followed by:—

"Gay god! my lot is cast alone In cities and in palaces, And there the garments are not known In which Phœnician milkmaids please: Nature, who charms by fields and brooks, In cities only moves to mirth, Her decorations have no worth Without the corresponding looks: These garlands you would think she weaves To make for queens a diadem, And dedicate her work to them, Shed in such company their leaves. Ah! sad indeed would be our lot If all the secrets were forgot By which unfading bloom the eye deceives. When Autumn's chill forbids to linger The pale-blue star that twinkled in the wheat Some kind, consolatory finger

Plants in our heads the vernal violet.

As for myself, if I abuse

My youthful cheek with borrowed hues,

Charge it to fashion, not to me;

Their task the Graces may not choose,

They do their work instinctively."

And now, behold the Muses' train

Canvass success with many a wile;

What can the brightest talents gain

Unless protecting Beauty smile?

In this sequestered place I see

Thalia cast her comic shoes,

Melpomene her buskin loose,

Each calling upon Destiny

To aid the wish that each may choose.

And all at once, on entering the door,

I hear the feeble, unfamiliar strain

Of one who loves the lyre with might and main,

Yet in this bower has not been heard before:—

"Lovely Europa! deign to make Choice of the labours I present, Daring—a rash experimentThe portrait of yourself to take.

Though in Olympian realms of air,
Or temple of Mnemosyne,
Your fitting place might surely be,
Which with the gods you well might share;
Yet, having Cupid for a guide,
I yielded to a thought more sweet,
Painting the Graces by your side
And all creation at your feet."

Austere reserve a moment poured
Light from her timid, drooping eyes;
That look alone was his reward,
And there Tibullus found his prize:
The nymph in such indulgent ways
Has silently bestowed her praise
And all his confidence restored:
So, on her solemn festal days,
With grace bewitching and divine,
The goddess of the Paphian shrine,
Accepts the vows that mortals raise.

Now all Apollo's sons have paid Their adoration to the maid; And even foolish Phaeton Amber upon her hair has laid;
And all return to Helicon.
Always loitering, always late,
After the appointed time,
Maids I cannot name in rhyme
Bring the gauzes delicate,
Lace, and ribbons shot with shade,
Which the purest taste has made,
Garlands and embroideries
Which attract us and perplex,
Flowery tints of soft degrees,
Image of a changeful sex.

This wealth of choice appears to strike
An eager and uncertain vision;
She seems to fancy some alike,
Yet finds the need of some decision;
Aye! the choice will soon be known,
Exquisite things appeal to her,
One seems to see Jove's minister
Bowing at Cytherea's throne;
And when I see the nymph assume
The feathers on her head that play,
I seem to see Mars share his plume
With Cupid on this happy day.

Appear, appear, mysterious urn! A thousand pleasures it contains, Promoter of our secret pains, Source of the flame in which we burn. Thy pleasant frauds our sight engage; Pandora's box restored, in truth, Whose wondrous colourings presage Embellishment to Aurora's youth And Baucis' mellow age. Brunettes with you awake our sense, And Blondes, with innocent pretence; And demi-beauty loves you well, In you she finds victorious arms: And even a total lack of charms Is cured by your almighty spell: But when a nymph like this you meet Be sure—if valued you would be— To say to her who shines complete, "You might dispense with me." Now lift your lid, and softly sink On the fresh lilies of her face. And skim with care the downy pink Thalia's hand has come to grace: I see that gracious hand adorn Europa's cheek with gradual blush, As if a god of love were born

At every movement of the brush.

Now, the bright tint in perfect beauty glows;

From the revived and quickening eyes

Bright beams for man's distinction rise;

Europa's self Europa hardly knows.

The gazers gasp, in giddy wise,

The faithless slave of Juno dares to swear

That Juno's self is not so fair.

Comus, the Graces, own surprise,

And Cupid's frequent pinions beat the air;

Plutus prepares his jewelled offerings,

Whose rays about her bosom flash and melt;

His fatal necklace lost Alcmæon brings,

And the three Graces lend their magic belt.

But what is this? Here, where the young Joys play
And laughing Pleasures bring their crowds,
What sombre mass of gathered clouds
Is wrapping in its crape the day!
And, from the deeps of yonder sky,
What rolling and portentous tone
Into the court's security
This dull foretaste of care has thrown!

The north wind seems resolved to wage A contest in the realms of space With thunderbolts prepared to rage Upon the unprotected place; No more we see the skilful hand That used to weave the ribbons there. Or please itself in many a band To weave the coils of long brown hair; No more we see the graceful curl Thick-sown with flowers of varied hues. No more behold the nimble girl The coloured drapery haste to choose: Awed by the tumult of the thunder, The saddened bower is filled with care: That faithless girl's affrighted wonder Enhances its despair!

Sounding among the silences

I hear a lamentation low—
Thunders and winds! your noise forego—
If Beauty, gods! your will displease,
Yet surely by such tears as these
She wins you to avert the blow.

Behold the pallor of her cheek,

And terminate the vengeances

That Juno seems to seek,

For she it is who, stung by spleen,

And, from the upshot, guessing at the theft,

And envying Europa's youthful mien,

The colours from that face has reft:

She goes with her complaint to Destiny,

And claims the metamorphosis

Of one whom she declares her enemy,

And menaces the Arbiter of bliss:

"Europa! let me change thee with a kiss
Into a rose," Love cried, in sympathy;

"At least, protected from alarms
Which still attend perfection,
You will not fear to lose your charms,
But evermore retain your bright complexion
Each morning, when I see Aurora's car,
Will find me weeping in dejection,
Then you will learn how dear to me you are,
When thus I mourn a hopeless recollection;
And if you see me my lament resume
The sight you shall, for me, record;
And that I may not miss my due reward,
Exert yourself to burgeon into bloom."

Thus tender Cupid's last resort
Suggests a pleasure that is pure,
And—lulling grief that cannot but endure—
Consoles Europa and her court;
Until the wind that caused their fright
Bears off the clouds that veiled the sun;
Then calm returns, the day grows bright,
The toilette's task, behold, is done.

And now beneath the silken folds

Europa shows her shining breast;

And, seeing her completely dressed,

Pallas her wondering hand withholds:

Narcissus, finally, has lent

His flower to furnish her bouquet;

And, if with favour she survey

What caused his fearful punishment,

Content, Narcissus! you may be,

And bless the metamorphosis,

Nor in yourself all beauty see

When near to such a rose as this.

And now, that all have done their tasks, Europa thanks their skilful care, And each in turn responsive asks, "What could we do had Nature not been fair?"

Yes, charming smile, yes, living bloom of youth!

Seductive features and a port divine,
And winning sweetness, are unerring sign

Of a heart filled with sympathetic truth!

'Tis thanks to you that her toilette has been
A real plunder of the deities:
The lily's whiteness and the azure eyes
Make the most perfect beauty we have seen

Under the canopy of yonder skies:
Jealous Olympus! conquer your dismay,

Your gods, be sure, have never wrought

Such charm, to such perfection wrought:
She claims your wreaths as much as they.

But let us utter no more vain complaints

Against the Will that orders sea and land!

In the high vault her coloured glory paints

Calm Iris, with an olive-branch in hand,

The listening world acquaints

With loved Europa's doom, at Heaven's command.

"The strokes of Juno fear thou not, For Jove to shelter thee has sworn; Be all thy griefs and cares forgot,

While envious thousands grudge thy lot,

Far from the happy place where thou wert born."

Immediately Europa disappears,

The god's great master, making her his prey,

Over the waves has borne her far away,

To scenes where wait for her the fated years.

Agenor, mourning father! dry your tears, Cilix and Phœnix, your adventurous boys, Will bring you tidings of their sister's joys. No sooner on the waters did the robe Of parting Juno shed its hue of flame, Than the most lovely quarter of the globe Assumed Europa's name; Following that light, her brothers' course is led Until they find out whither she has fled; And, in the lands where they have sped, The people stop them on the ways To tell her glory and to sing her praise, And celebrate the beauties they have seen In their adopted Queen: Cilix and Phœnix, to her palace come, Have found her in her tiring-room;

May she accept my pictures, that will be— Do what I may—less beautiful than she.





CANTO IV.

Apollo and Thetis.

-

Ir in the praise of paint my muse be found Trespassing, indiscreet, on dangerous ground, She does it, Celia, with a good intent; Forego this hidden shame; no ill is meant; Nor need you think that Nature ever frowned At seeing added charms that Art had lent.

It is the hour in which the fair are bent.
On leaving decoration's weary round;
When day is ended, and the calm night throws
On Love's delights the veil of her repose,
God of the world's light, source of every art!
Let renewed fire from thee inspire my heart,
Accept the latest labours that I bring;
Thy loves, thine absence, and thy rest, I sing,
Thy rest, in the moist region of the waves,

Where every night thy car its axle laves; Soft god! by all thy charm and all thy power, Afford thy help and a propitious hour, So that the cadence of my rhymes may be Worthy of thee!

Leuconoe, Daphne, Clyte; these are names;
Though, while they lived, Apollo owned their flames,
But for dear Thetis—since he ceased to range—

He feels a passion that may not be wild But still renewed, will never die, nor change;

Thus, true and tender, passionate yet mild,
He seeks her amorous couch, by slow degrees,
And sinking there is hidden by the seas;
While half the earth receives his blunted beams,
Her dolphins resting in the briny streams,
While Thetis to her bower is gone:

Ye azure curtains fall; reveal her light; Gauzes, that hide her beauty from our sight, Will you not be withdrawn?

And, now that day has brought the joys of night,
Their lady to her rest the nymphs have dight;
And jealous veils, that round her clung, unfold,

And the fair goddess has abandoned quite Her purple garb, her sapphire, and her gold: Her noble form the aid of Art forgets; Nature and Love unite: when the sun sets The charming Thetis is adorned alone With the three Graces' zone. And with the tresses of her golden hair Chance-thrown upon her shoulders bare: In her attire the simple Graces still Forego the pains of skill; And, of the needless charm of borrowed red. Scarce leave a trace; and Flora's sweets are spread Over the water's tranquil space; And floating Zephyr from the rose has shed Refreshing petals all about the place: Incense is burning; and the nymphs provide The scarf and seemly gauze she soon will lay aside.

Ah, Cupid! yet the clouds of spleen,
Although thy happy hour is near,
Amidst the festal glory of the scene
Upon her radiant forehead will appear;
Though she will presently be crowned
With myrtle wreaths that Joy has bound

Upon her head to go,
And written upon all around
Two interwoven names will show.

Meanwhile, a sheet of purple, softly drawn,
Across the limits of the heaven is spread,
Such as, at daybreak, decorates the dawn
Risen from Tithonus' bed;
But, whilst he gilds her azure veil,
What does Apollo hear?
It is the faithful lover's wail,
'Tis Thetis murmuring near.

"Wouldst thou," she cries, "insulting, bring to me
The ardours kindled by that temple-maid,
While, after teaching those desires to thee,
She is, in turn, betrayed;
When all day long thou'st been pursuing
This mortal beauty, me, at night, art wooing;
And is true tenderness forgotten, then,
Among the gods as among mortal men;
So that one happy love's contented rest
Can never be enough to make them blest?
Fidelity—which every lover vaunts—

Has fled, in tears, her wonted haunts, And thus the altar of the Paphian god Is utterly overthrown:

And beams of thine illumine no abode Where mutual flames are known.

Once, when upon my breast you lay,

The tears were neither cold nor few
With which, at falling of delicious day,
You would my charms bedew;

What vows you made! With what a growing flame We fed our hearts, until at length there came The same desire to each: and now you make No scruple, and require no pains, to break The links of love that luckless I have worn So long that by them my poor heart is torn:

I sacrificed—to please thine amorous will— My Heaven-appointed spouse,

Yet one who pleases thee with happier skill Receives thy vagrant vows.

Ah! yet, I know, this new-loved maid Must weep her own sad fate in turn,

And I, whom thou hast ruined and betrayed,
Shall surely teach thee retribution's laws
When some fresh god shall love me and avenge my
cause."

But fickle Phœbus dares not lean On bygone joys in backward flight: Driven by stern laws to quit the scene, He leaves it to the powers of night: Come, erring mortal lovers! Will you see The god of light in his severe distress-Amyntas is more blest than he, Besides his shepherdess— And, "Think not," he exclaims, "that thou couldst be Cast off for her by one who loves like me; Though, when my goddess is away My heart to other loves might stray, Yet truth would surely gain her sway When I return to thee: Nor did I seek new joys; if pleasure came I would resist the claim, And, if temptation wooed me to forget, My wounded heart would murmur its regret."

"I should regret thee also," Thetis cried,
"Nor can light's deity in vain have sighed."
So saying, with a tender hand
Which shy emotion shook,
Above the horizon's circling band

Apollo's hand she took:

Their blended kisses thickly rain,
Repeated sighs their breath employ,
While distant echo sounds again
The tender accents of their joy;
Thetis has gained pathetic charms,
Transports more sweet and amorous;
Apollo kindles in her loving arms
The fires that he has quenched for us.

So, weary with the labours of the day,
A loving husband takes his homeward way,
To find in the caresses of his wife
A charm that cures the ills of life
Or drives their thought away;
So, when his daily course is run,
And night's unbending is begun,
Apollo upon Thetis' lips
The guerdon of his labour sips:
What boundless happiness his heart excites,
And lavishes unquenchable delights!
Aye! when the days, in many a dreary round,
Have kept them longing for a hopeless bliss,
What rapture, what delirious joy is found,

When joined at length, two lovers kiss:
And even such a fathomless abyss
Of undisturbed felicity
Holds the immortal pair in ecstasy,
While gods of sea and sky have laid aside
The cares of earth and changes of the tide.

The image of that deathless dalliance
Is mirrored in the ocean's calm expanse;
And, while the broken lights reflected lie,
The careless waters murmur in reply;
Triton is touched, the Nereid owns his care,
And Thetis finds her love repeated there:
But night conceals the mystery from men,
Till Phœbus tells the world, he comes again—
Be yours to imitate those heavenly vows,
The mortal husband and the tender spouse!

All creatures seek their loves at this sweet hour,
The bee sinks brooding on his favourite flower,
In woods the stock-dove calls, with tender noise,
His mate, whose fond wings tremble at his voice;
I hear the partridge in the furrows falling,
The hart pursues the hind with amorous calling;

Each seeks, in solitude, the known delight,
Led by uneasy love through shades of night;
Zephyr, on green lawns floating, has confessed
To Flora's young and sympathetic breast;
Tithonus, quickened by Aurora's truth,
Detains her, till she brings him back his youth;
And plains and valleys, groves, and mountains steep,
Are full of guests whose love has banished sleep.

Peasants, whose days are darkened by distress, Have gained an interval of happiness;
Leander flies to Hero through the sea;
Thisbe meets Pyramus beneath the tree;
Only Annette—sweet maiden of fifteen—
Distracted starts, two hours of sleep between;
Alas, poor soul! for, is there grief so sore
As not to know what one is longing for?

Ah, charming sex, and subject of my songs!

The homage, which to you, of right belongs

I render here in willing loyalty;

And nothing is so great a joy to me:

May wingless Love be with you, night and day!

For, if you deign to smile when you survey

The pictures I have drawn of your toilette, Your lovely smile will make the earth more lovely yet.



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